

# «¿Quién es marido de quién?»<sup>1</sup>

## Gender Confusion in the Plays of Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva

### «¿Quién es marido de quién?» Confusión de género en las comedias de Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva

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**Abstract.** Much critical work has been dedicated in recent years to the transgressive representation of gender in the plays of the Spanish Golden Age, an interest sparked in great measure by Merveen McKendrick's seminal work: *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age. A Study of the «Mujer Varonil»* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974). This article examines the depiction of gender ambiguity and confusion in the plays of the Andalusian dramatist Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva, with a special focus on *El caballero dama* and *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*. While Monroy y Silva's depictions of gender ambiguity usually correspond to the conventional categories of *mujer vestida de hombre* or *mujer varonil*, these two plays offer interesting and original case studies. *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* presents an almost unheard of case of gender dysphoria.

1. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, p. 28. Unless otherwise noted, the plays included in this study have been accessed through the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes website (<[www.cervantesvirtual.com](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com)>). I cite their titles by the original spellings in the list of works cited and modernize their spelling in the text of the article. Quotations from these plays respect the original orthography but modernize the accentuation.

**Keywords.** Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva; Gender Confusion; Gender Dysphoria; *El caballero dama*; *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*.

**Resumen.** En años recientes se ha prestado mucha atención crítica a la representación transgresiva de la cuestión del género en las comedias auriseculares, un interés morivado en gran medida por el estudio pionero de Melveena McKendrick: *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age. A Study of the «Mujer Varonil»* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974). El estudio presente analiza la representación de la ambigüedad y confusión genéricas en las comedias del dramaturgo andaluz Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva, con un énfasis especial en *El caballero dama* y *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*. Estas obras van más allá de la convención típica de *la mujer vestida de hombre* o de *la mujer varonil* para presentar casos mucho más interesantes y originales. *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* nos ofrece un caso inaudito de la disforia de género.

**Palabras clave.** Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva; Confusión de género; Disforia de género; *El caballero dama*; *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*.

Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva (Alcalá de Guadaíra, 1612-1649) may perhaps be best known today for his *refundición* of Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*. Actively involved in local politics for most of his adult life (he was named *regidor perpetuo* of Alcalá in 1639), and occasionally enmeshed in intrigue and scandal during his brief time on earth<sup>2</sup>, Monroy y Silva was also a fairly prolific playwright, situating many of his comedies in or around his native Alcalá. Before he died prematurely of the Great Plague that killed nearly half the population of Sevilla in 1649, he burned many of his dramatic manuscripts, but fortunately, copies held by friends account for many of his comedies. The following list of his plays is taken from the summary by José María Pérez Estrada summarizes his dramatic production thus:

es un seguidor de la escuela de Lope; artesano más bien que artífice del teatro español, conoce por dentro los recursos de la escena, y tiene un estilo suelto, que

2. Bem Barroca relates this anecdote: «A fines de 1646 o principio del 47, el poeta vivió el papel de uno de los protagonistas de sus comedias. Aunque no sabemos las causas que le llevaron a comportarse como valentón, lo cierto es que tuvo un duelo con su cuñado, don Francisco de Andrade. Llevaron el incidente a la Real Audiencia, y según el alcalde ordinario, don Juan de Bordas Ynestrosa, fue sentenciado a pagar quinientos ducados y cuatro años de guerra» (Introducción a *Dos comedias inéditas de don Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva*, p. 19).

3. The exact number is difficult to ascertain, as critics tend to disagree. Fernández Nieto provides a catalogue of the comedies by Monroy de Silva, the location of copies and, in some cases, plot summaries (1975, II, pp 549-569). Bem Barroca indicates that the total number of works documented for our dramatist, including comedies, *autos sacramentales* and a *Historia de Alcalá de Guadaíra*, amount to 38 (Introducción a *Dos comedias inéditas de don Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva*, p. 9). The full length plays listed by Bem Barroca number 31 (Introducción a *Dos comedias inéditas de don Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva*, pp. 24-25). CATCOM (<catcom.uv.es>), the data base of DICAT, directed by Teresa Ferrer Valls, does not include any information on the staging of plays by Monroy y Silva, nor is there information on the staging of the plays analyzed in the present article in Varey and Shergold, 1989.

lo mismo usa la hinchazón verbal que detiene la comedia y la expande en lirismo palabrero, que el diálogo restallante, precipitado. Y sobre todo sabe lo que gusta a un público que conoce ya el magisterio teatral de Lope y que cuenta con el teatro como si fuese una institución de la vida nacional, tan necesaria como el pan<sup>4</sup>.

In this study I would like to explore one particular strategy utilized by Monroy y Silva to please that public he knew so intimately: the teasing of the boundaries of gender identity, a device found in a fair number of his plays, in order to show that his most substantial contributions to this popular dramatic convention are found in the plays *El caballero dama* and *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*.

Northrop Frye has noted that the comic vein of romance: «is more particularly the story of guile and craft, the triumph of *froda*. Its themes often feature disguise and concealment of identity, both from the characters and from the audience, and its plot normally moves toward an end acceptable to the audience but unlikely under the conditions of the action»<sup>5</sup>. The Spanish Golden Age *comedia* often exploited popular conventions adapted from the romance tradition to create plot intrigue and stir the senses. One of the most frequent of these dramatic conventions involves a quest for the recuperation of a lost social identity. More often than not, it is a violated or defrauded female character in these plays who must adopt a new identity until such a time as she is able to vindicate her lost honor and reintegrate herself into the social fabric with her figurative social maidenhead restored. This pattern of wholeness, loss and restitution characterizes a great number of Spanish Golden Age comedies. The device most frequently exploited to effect the carnivalesque adoption of a temporary social mask is that of crossdressing and/or the depiction of the *mujer varonil*<sup>6</sup>.

The popularity of onstage crossdressing in Spanish Golden Age drama has been amply studied. As Seagraves has explained:

The female transvestite, a staple of Lope's plays, proved to be a commercial asset given her popularity with audiences. She soon became a convention, as popular playwrights made use of the figure in their plays. Our information about early modern costuming suggests the reasoning behind this fascination was that the male costume would have revealed more of the female form, thus enticing male audience members from the stage with the rare glimpse of a bare ankle or clearly delineated silhouette not visible in female costumes. These details point to the voyeuristic nature of the *mujer vestida de hombre* phenomenon during the *comedia*'s heyday, as well as the series of moralistic objections that arose surrounding the stage practice<sup>7</sup>.

As this critic suggests, the moralists were outraged and scandalized by both female and male transvestism.

4. López Estrada, 1965, p. 57.

5. Frye, 1976, p. 68.

6. The plays of Monroy y Silva escaped the attention of Melveena McKendrick (1974). Bravo Villasante makes only a brief mention of *El caballero dama* in her discussion of Lope's *El Aquiles* (1955, p. 117, n. 7).

7. Seagraves, 2014, p. 13.

The Jesuit priest Ignacio de Camargo, to cite just one example, railed vociferously against the vicissitudes of crossdressing, regardless of gender:

Una de las cosas que más afean es vestirse de mujeres los hombres y remedar afeminadamente sus melindrosos ademanes [...] ¿Cuánto peor es sin comparación representar mujeres vestidas de hombres, como se hace en las [comedias] de ahora?<sup>8</sup>

The reservations of this arbiter of social mores were multiple. He was gravely concerned with the lurid enticements to sin entailed in the voyeuristic transformation played out onstage of female to male, and the ensuing undraping of the hidden female form led inevitably, in his opinion, to lascivious thoughts in male spectators, especially when the transgressor danced in male attire, stirring them even further to a lustful rage:

Y lo que es cosa muy usada en las comedias, y no menos inmodesta, las mujeres se visten de hombres, lo cual (fuera de estar prohibido en el *Deuteronomio*, donde dice Dios que es abominable en sus ojos quien lo hace, y en el Canon 62 de la 6. Sinodo) es cosa de suyo mala, como enseña el Doctor Angélico, y que provoca a lascivia; cuanto más tales mujeres, y en aquel sitio. ¿Qué cosa más torpe y provocativa que ver a una mujer de esta cualidad, que estaba ahora en el tablado, dama hermosa, afeitada y afectada, salir dentro de un instante vestida de galán airoso, ofreciendo al registro de los ojos de tantos hombres todo el cuerpo, que la naturaleza misma quiso que estuviese siempre casi todo retirado de la vista? ¿Pues qué sería si en este traje danzase, como lo hacen muchas veces? ¿Cuál estarán los corazones de muchos infelices, que las miraron antes, y con cuidado en su traje de mujeres?<sup>9</sup>

Camargo also shared the belief of his fellow moralists that the entertainment afforded by viewing these lascivious plays led male spectators down the primrose path to effeminacy:

¿Mas quién yamás [sic] pensara ver a los hombres, nacidos solo para nobles y varoniles empresas, abatidos a tan bajos y afeminados empleos, que apenas se distinguen de las mujeres? Entregados totalmente a fiestas profanas, a músicas, a paseos, a los amores lascivos, a conversaciones ociosas, a juegos, y divertimientos vanos, a peinar, trenzar, y teñir el pelo, a rizar la cabellera postiza, a pulir y componer el vestido con tanta prolijidad y melindre como la dama más delicada? ¿De dónde pueden nacer estos viles y afeminados efectos, sino de el centro de las delicias sensuales, que son los patios de las comedias, fuente universal de todos los vicios, y de todos los excesos, como les llaman los santos?<sup>10</sup>

These comments typify an oft-repeated outrage voiced in the long history of the controversies over the licitness of theatrical performances in Golden Age Spain: the

8. Camargo, *Discurso teológico sobre los teatros y comedias de este siglo*, p. 58.

9. Camargo, *Discurso teológico sobre los teatros y comedias de este siglo*, pp. 90-91.

10. Camargo, *Discurso teológico sobre los teatros y comedias de este siglo*, pp. 115-116.

deep-rooted fear of sexual alterity and its perceived role in the moral depravation of society<sup>11</sup>.

Like most other Spanish Golden Age dramatists, Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva exploited fully the popular dramatic conventions of cross-dressing and the *mujer varonil*. In the typical case, women dress as men in his and other Spanish Golden Age plays in order to traverse the boundaries of male dominated society and recuperate lost honor and their gender appropriate social identity and status. Such is the case of Leonor, for example, in *El ofensor de sí mismo*, who challenges her now reluctant lover Diego to a swordfight when he abandons her after learning that she accidentally surrendered her honor to another man. In *El pastor más perseguido y finezas de Raquel*, we find a curious case of a woman described as a beast that descends a mountain to the stage, transformed into a woman dressed as a man, symbolizing Cupid: «Desciende una fiera cubierta de pieles, por el monte al tablado [...] Al embestir a la fiera, se le caen las pieles y descúbrese una mujer en traje de hombre con arco y flecha, y vendados los ojos, como pintan a Cupido, y vase»<sup>12</sup>. In *Envidias vencen fortunas*, Zayda and Celima disguise themselves briefly as men to prevent the Maestre Pedro Girón from killing Gazul<sup>13</sup>. In our dramatist's *refundición* of Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*, Flor dons male garb and engages in swordplay with the Comendador, wounding him, and in the same guise she thrusts and parries briefly with her lover don Juan, before surrendering to him. The Amazons of *La destrucción de Troya* present themselves to the spectators dressed as men: «Sale Pantasilea de hombre a caballo, con sombrero de plumas, espada y daga, y tres o cuatro damas a caballo, con el mismo traje, y todas con lanzas y adargas»<sup>14</sup>. The spurned Celia dons male clothing in *Las mocedades del duque de Osuna* and challenges her lover to a swordfight. The duke is so impressed by her virile valor and ability that he decides to start loving her again<sup>15</sup>. In *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor*, Porcia appears in the first act at the hunt, with *varonil osadía*<sup>16</sup>, and comes onstage with a bloody spear after killing a bear and a ferocious lion. In this same play Margarita dresses as a man in order to spy on her lover Carlos at night. When he is attacked by two would-be assassins, she draws her sword and fends them off, pretending to be the *gracioso* Meno<sup>17</sup>. These initial examples of gender boundary transgressions in the plays of Monroy y Silva are rather simplistic and conventional, included, I believe, primarily for the sake of titillation and attracting a paying public to the performances. They cannot be argued to provide evidence of a subculture of alterity, although such readings are certainly plausible.

More complex, however, is the situation in *El caballero dama*, a play that dramatizes the myth of Achilles, following the examples of Lope de Vega and Pedro

11. See Cotarelo y Mori (1997) for Camargo and many other similar texts.

12. Monroy y Silva, *El pastor más perseguido y finezas de Raquel*, p. 22.

13. Monroy y Silva, *Envidias vencen fortunas*, fol. 214v.

14. Monroy y Silva, *La destrucción de Troya*, p. 8.

15. Monroy y Silva, *Las mocedades del duque de Osuna*, pp. 15-16.

16. Monroy y Silva, Monroy y Silva, *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor*, pp. 85-88, p. 71.

17. Monroy y Silva, *Mudanzas de la fortuna y firmezas del amor*, pp. 85-88.

Calderón de la Barca<sup>18</sup>. It is a play that has received considerable critical attention for its exploration of gender boundaries. Daniel Altamiranda, for example, views *El caballero dama* as a play that lends itself to a queer reading. He argues that through the character of Achilles, performed by an actress, according to the stage directions<sup>19</sup>, «Monroy exploits the audience perception of actor/actress and performance, of reality and illusion, giving rise to one of the characters, the princess Deidamia, who expresses her uncommon attraction for others, and by the same token repulsion, overdetermined by the cultural codes of seventeenth-century society»<sup>20</sup>. However, Manuel Abad points out that the androgyny of Achilles is inherent in the myth itself, and that the real innovation by Monroy is that the protagonist shares his secret with the *gracioso* Pulgón<sup>21</sup>. Sidney Donnell's assessment goes a bit further: «Although cross-dressing in *El caballero dama* triggers a patriarchal reaction in favor of essentialist gender and class identities, and against a possible male renegotiation of male homosexual relations, its author fails to resolve conflicts generated by drag performance in the plot»<sup>22</sup>.

I would like to point out some facets of *El caballero dama* that seem to have gone unnoticed by previous criticism. The initial appearance of the protagonist Aquiles onstage is symbolically phallic and suggestive of a sexual violation, as the character enters dressed for the hunt with a bloody sword drawn and at the ready: «Sale Aquiles, galán, de caza, con la espada desnuda, y ensangrentada»<sup>23</sup>. Assuming that the role was entrusted to an actress in all performances of the play, the androgyny of Aquiles would have been visually marked for the audience from the very beginning of the play. The object of the hunt, as our protagonist narrates the play's unstaged prehistory, is another phallically charged symbol that would have struck the spectators as highly unusual: the porcupine. Who hunts porcupines?<sup>24</sup> The Old World porcupine (*Hystrixidae*) is a slow and lumbering nocturnal creature that would not be particularly challenging to kill, and would not offer much of a meal. Since Aquiles is still identifying as a man at this point of the play, his aggressive pursuit of the porcupine (*espín*) can be interpreted as the playing out of homoerotic desire and aggression, as he pursues an animal whose quills spring erect

18. Antonucci points out that this play is a *refundición* of Tirso de Molina's *El Aquiles* (2003, p. 316). See also the study of Kromayer (1987) on this topic.

19. There is no such stage direction in the 1768 *suelta* that I have consulted. However, an undated *suelta* housed in the collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and digitally scanned by archive.org, does indeed include this annotation in the cast list: *Aquiles, que lo ha de hazer una muger con nombre fingido de Aurora*. The same stage direction is found in another undated *suelta* published in Sevilla: Imprenta de la viuda de Francisco de Leefdael, and digitally scanned by the Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico (bvpb.mcu.es). O'Connor notes that a woman also played the role of Achilles in Tirso's *El Aquiles* and Calderón's *El monstruo de los jardines* (1984, p. 18).

20. Altamiranda, 1999, p. 119.

21. Abad, 2001, p. 184.

22. Donnell, 2003, p. 187.

23. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 1.

24. In Indonesia and China, a species of porcupine (*Hystrix crassipinis*, *H. pumila*, *H. javanica*) is prized for the bezoars that can form inside their stomachs. The Chinese bezoar is associated with aphrodisiacal properties (Roze, 2012, p. 162).



when confronted by a predator. The advances of Aquiles are repulsed, however, or the tables are perhaps turned on him, as the hunter becomes the hunted when the porcupine fires its quills at him. These barbed and erect thrusts are simultaneously repulsed and absorbed as Aquiles receives these advances with his shield. His androgyny is manifest as he symbolically rejects the direct piercing of his flesh, but nonetheless welcomes the penetration that turns his shield into an emblem of masculinity:

AQUILES

... seguí un espín, que con ventaja huía,  
pues él bolaba quando yo corría,  
hasta que ya acosado,  
sobre un risco hace rostro fatigado;  
[...]  
y amenazando con igual porfía,  
las buidas espinas prevenía.  
[...]  
tantas flechas dispara de sí mismo,  
que en cada una tira un parasismo.  
[...]  
Yo, armado de valor, y de cautela,  
embrazo la rodela,  
donde el espín, que osado me embestía,  
trasladó las espinas que tenía,  
y la rodela en tan confusa calma,  
pasó plaza de espín, aunque sin alma<sup>25</sup>.

The shield of Aquiles, with the quills embedded, is thus transformed into the animal itself, and Aquiles adds a trophy to his arsenal of phallic weaponry<sup>26</sup>. As punishment for this violent aggression, Aquiles decapitates the porcupine, and in so doing emasculates it symbolically. The sight of this bizarre and gruesome spectacle unfolded before the eyes of a nearby lion, the ultimate symbol of virility. Aquiles, now armed with his sword and the porcupine quills, charged the lion, causing it to turn and flee from the hunter<sup>27</sup>.

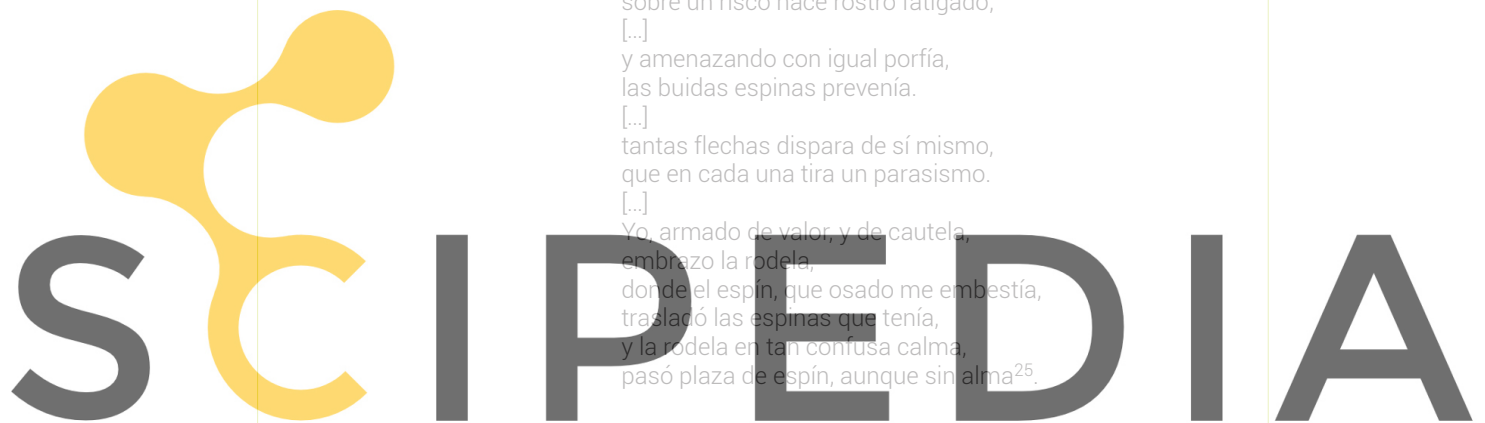
The transformation of Aquiles into a woman occurs when Policarpo takes him to Spain at the request of his mother Tetis in order to try to avert the death that her interpretation of the stars foretold for him in the war between Greece and Troy. The play informs us that Spanish monarchs have the custom of hiding away their daughters, prior to their marriage, in a remote *alcázar*, protected from the dangers of social interaction with men; Policarpo thus forces Aquiles to dress as a woman in order to seek protection at the court of King Licomedes. He also emasculates Aquiles symbolically by forcing him to surrender his sword<sup>28</sup>. Not yet 15, Aquiles has delicate skin and golden tresses: «Tus pocos años, que aora / apenas llegan a

25. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 1.

26. The shield of Achilles as an ekphrastic creation has long fascinated critics. See, for example, Blanco Freijeiro (1986) and Flórez Flórez (2011).

27. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 2.

28. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 3.



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quince, / la candidez de tu rostro, / con que la nieve compite, / y la dorada madeja, / que ondea en viento apacible»<sup>29</sup>. As such, Aquiles, as androgyne, has no problems passing himself off as a woman (Aurora). Indeed, his total metamorphosis, which happens offstage, is so convincing that King Licomedes himself falls in love with the young hero in female attire.

A bit later in the first act, Aquiles, in the guise of Aurora, comes onstage carrying another stage property with obvious phallic symbolism: a dagger: «Sale Aquiles en traje de muger, la cara ensangrentada, y la daga en la mano, y Pulgón»<sup>30</sup>. The blood on his sword that earlier suggested the perpetrator of sexual aggression is now smeared on his face, hinting that he is now the passive victim of some form of violation. Aquiles (Aurora) delivers a lengthy *relación*, saying "she" is Greek and noble. A *caballero* named Segismundo fell in love with "her" and "she" soon felt the same way. "Her" father found out and set up an ambush in which Segismundo was wounded. The two lovers escaped to a village where Aurora's "husband" recovered from his wounds, and they went to a port to catch a ship to Spain. En route they suffered a terrible storm at sea. Having disembarked the previous night and on the way to the Palace they were assaulted by *bandidos* who killed Segismundo with the knife "she" carries onstage. "She" then faints. It is at this point that king Licomedes is smitten by "Aurora". The language that the monarch uses to express the stirrings that he feels in the presence of Aurora is strangely reminiscent of the earlier scene of the porcupine firing its quills, with its erotic connotations of penetration: «No ha podido resistir / el corazón a las flechas, / que sus celestiales ojos / disparan a mis potencias»<sup>31</sup>.

King Licomedes makes several unsuccessful attempts to take "Aurora" by force. Aquiles (Aurora), however, is in love with the king's sister, Deidamia. The latter is convinced that Aurora is a man, so she asks Aurora to dress as a man and court her, "pretending" to be a man. In the final act, when Licomedes engages with what might be viewed as homoerotic swordplay with the individual he now believes to be Aquiles, Deidamia invents the clever metadramatic excuse that she had dressed "Aurora" that way because her *damas* were *ensayando una Comedia*<sup>32</sup>.

The gender identity of Aquiles (Aurora) is questioned constantly in this play. Segismundo asks the *gracioso* Pulgón to identify the gender of his master Aquiles, but his response is humorously ambiguous:

29. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 2.

30. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 4. The corresponding stage direction in the Chapel Hill *suelta* plays more to the character's gender ambiguity, as Aquiles enters holding in one hand a handkerchief drenched in blood, and in the other a dagger stained with blood: «Sale Aquiles en traje de dama suelto el cabello sin chapines; arrastrando la ropa, en la mano siniestra un lençuelo con sangre, y en la derecha una daga, y el rostro salpicado de sangre, y Pulgón» (Monroy y Silva, undated *suelta*, p. 65).

31. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 7.

32. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 21.



PULGÓN                   ... que yo no sé conocer  
si es mi ama hombre o mujer,  
o si es ambas cosas juntas.  
[...]

SEGISMUNDO           Y en duda tan exquisita,  
¿por qué le juzgas, Pulgón?

PULGÓN                   Unas veces por capón,  
y otras por hermafrodita<sup>33</sup>.

Pulgón, when pressed to assign a gender to his master/mistress, ingeniously avoids the trap, leaving him essentially genderless as either a eunuch or hermaphrodite.

The farcical romp of gender confusion in *El caballero dama* extends beyond the character of Aquiles (Aurora). In the third act, Pulgón arrives at the room of his rival and fellow *gracioso* Pistolete. He dons a *saya* and *manto* and pretending that he is a woman, he alters his voice and asks Pistolete if he is "Pulgón". Pistolete asks if "she" wants to come in his room, and "she" answers: «en tu cuarto, y en tu cama»<sup>34</sup>. Pulgón tells him to kill the light and get naked, because as a virgin, "she" is ashamed: «La lumbre no quiero ver, / porque como soy doncella, /tengo vergüenza de vella»<sup>35</sup>. "She" asks Pistolete to embrace "her", but says that his face stinks and he must wash himself with the perfumed water that "she" has brought. Pulgón pours ink mixed with *agua olorosa* into Pistolete's hands so that he can wash his face and neck. The trickster then begins to shout out loud for help, saying that "she" is being forced and that someone is trying to take "her" honor. Pistolete's public humiliation as someone who has figuratively allowed himself to be courted and deceived by another man (though disguised as a woman) results in his being a literally *maculated* and thus a figuratively *emasculated* man in the eyes of all who behold him.

In the final analysis, the highly suggestive teasing of the boundaries of sexual identity in *El caballero dama* disappoints, from a modern perspective, in that it succumbs to the typical trajectory of Golden Age plays of this type that borrow from romance conventions. Aquiles resolutely reclaims his masculine identity through both his words and his actions at the end of the play, as he tears off his disguise of feminine apparel and reappropriates the phallic instrument of a sword forcefully from Pulgón after his proclamation:

AQUILES                   Ulises, no te engañaste,  
Aquiles soy, que con estas  
galas viví disfrazado,  
por rendirme a la obediencia  
de la diosa Tetis; rompa

33. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 22.

34. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 23.

35. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 23.

afeminadas cautelas  
mi valor, no soy Aurora<sup>36</sup>.

The highly unusual and daring appearance of a male character (played by a woman) who remains crossdressed for a substantial portion of the play is for all intents and purposes repudiated by the play's conventional ending, where traditional gender roles are triumphantly reaffirmed<sup>37</sup>. If *El caballero dama* pushes beyond what we normally expect of the convention of gender confusion is the Spanish Golden Age *comedia*, it does not reach the threshold of possible gender dysphoria.

Monroy y Silva's *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, however, is much more daring and perhaps even groundbreaking in its depiction of gender identity. Its plot is partially based on Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre* (1610?-1620?). In Castro's play the siblings Félix and Hípolita have been raised apart by the parent of the opposite sex (Costanza and Pedro). Reunited at the age of 20, both children reveal behavioral traits appropriate to the opposite gender. Each parent in turn is mortified to see the long-lost child act in a manner so offensive to their (and society's) expectations. The play then explores whether or not gender identity is inherent, or if it can be shaped and transformed by the «force of habit» (*La fuerza de la costumbre*). So although Guillén de Castro playfully teases the boundaries of gender identification, he does not concern himself with gender dysphoria. The transformative power of love works its magic and causes the siblings to abandon their socially acquired behaviors and return instead to their biological and socially acceptable identities.

The modern notion of gender dysphoria is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as:

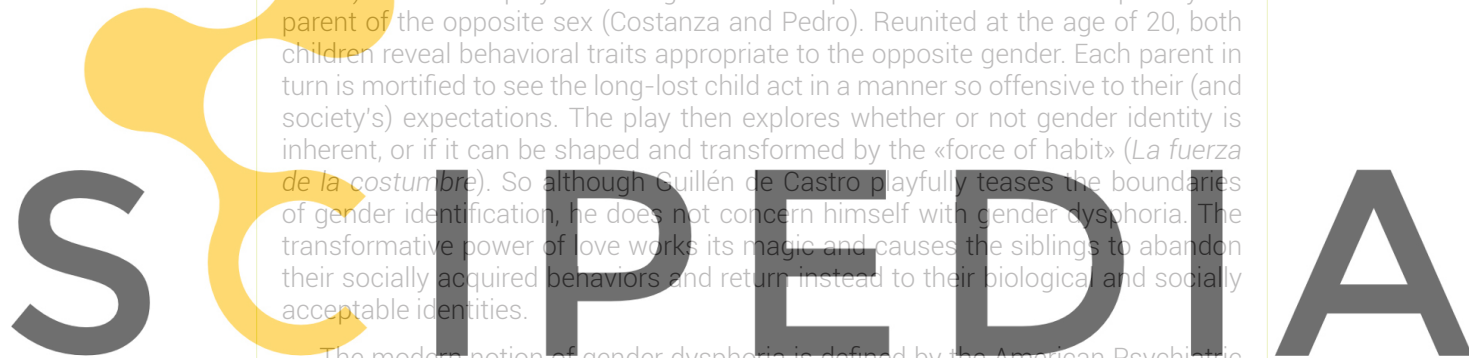
a conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify. [...] People with gender dysphoria may often experience significant distress and/or problems functioning associated with this conflict between the way they feel and think of themselves (referred to as experienced or expressed gender) and their physical or assigned gender. [...] People with gender dysphoria may allow themselves to express their true selves and may openly want to be affirmed in their gender identity. They may use clothes and hairstyles and adopt a new first name of their experienced gender<sup>38</sup>.

Gender dysphoria, the distress occasioned in individuals who identify with a gender incongruent with their biological sex, is a seldom-explored phenomenon in Spanish Golden Age literature, which makes the historical play *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* all the more remarkable for its intriguing case history of

36. Monroy y Silva, *El caballero dama*, p. 27.

37. I agree with O'Connor's assessment of *El caballero dama*, and I believe that it can be applied more broadly to gender confusion in almost all of Monroy y Silva's dramatic production: «Monroy toys with the audience's sense of values and morals; he insinuates a concern beyond the range of the normal dramatic fare. And although we are brought to the brink of moral depravation, we never fall into that forbidden area so abhorrent [sic] to Spanish censors and so alien to Spanish moral and social pride» (1984, p. 35).

38. Parekh, 2016, s. p.



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gender identity confusion<sup>39</sup>. Monroy y Silva appropriates only a few details from his apparent source. There is only one child at play here: Lisarda, who has been raised by her father<sup>40</sup>. From her very first appearance early in the first act, Lisarda is dressed as the soldier Lisardo, and although her lackey Lobón calls her *ahembrado* and *capón* due to her lack of facial hair, (not yet knowing that she is in fact female), her actions and attitude are decidedly and consistently virile:

LOBÓN	Sé que eres un ahembrado, que te tratan como a niño, que eres menos que lampiño, que vives desesperado de barbas; que tus mejillas lo pueden ser de una dama [...] pues tan calvo te imagino de barbas, y de bigotes, que tienes (no te alborotes) la cara de perro chino: que eres capón, aunque osado, arrojado y atrevido; y al fin eres, por raído de barbas, desvergonzado <sup>41</sup> .
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The daughter of Captain Diego de Ávila, she has grown up without a mother in a military environment. Lobón insists that the lack of a beard is a sure omen of the young soldier's inefficacy for military exploits, but Lisarda responds: «Yo tengo barbas, Lobón, / mejores, y más honradas / [...] / En el corazón»<sup>42</sup>. When her father

39. See Fausta Antonucci for the debt that Monroy's play owes to Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*, (2003, especially pp. 323-324) and Pintacuda's critical edition for its debt to Francisco Agustín Tárrega's *Cerco de Pavía y prisión del rey de Francia* (Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, p. xii). In this latter play gender confusion is minimal. Casandra and her maid Nuncia disguise themselves first as *villanos* and then as *franceses*, but fail in convincing the men they meet that they too are male. Studies on gender roles in Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre* include those by Jeffs (2011), Thacker's chapter on «A Sense of Theatre» (2002), Vélez Quiñones (2013), Seagraves (2014) and the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Melissa Reneé Machit (2013), a critical edition and study of *La fuerza de la costumbre*. This play is also thought to have been the source of *Love's cure: or, the martial maid. A comedy. Written by Mr. Francis Beaumont, and Mr. John Fletcher* (1612-13?). See on this matter: Erickson (1962, pp. 102-119). CATCOM does not document any performances of this play.

40. The only other significant detail shared by the two plays, in addition to those pointed out by Antonucci, is the humorous scene where the women are forced to dress in female attire for the first time, and trip and fall when they try to walk with *chapines*. We must acknowledge at the outset that Lisarda is not a fully-developed character in Monroy y Silva's play, since she appears only as part of its subplot.

41. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1278-1296, p. 10.

42. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1321-1324, p. 11. More likely than not, Lisarda is comparing herself here to Aristomenes, king of Messenia, who valiantly resisted the Spartans for 11 years. Pliny says in his *Natural History*: «Dízese también que algunos le [el corazón] tienen veloso, y que no hay otros de más fuerte industria, según que lo fue Aristómenes, messenio, el cual mató 400 lacedemonios [...] asido tercera vez, le abrieron los lacedemonios el pecho estando vivo, y hallaron el corazón veloso» (1999, Libro XI, capítulo 37, pp. 553-554). The Jesuit historian Gabriel

calls her by her name, she refuses to acknowledge him: «Como yo no soy Lisarda, entendí, / que a alguna Dama llamabas»<sup>43</sup>. She even threatens to harm her father if he continues to treat her as a woman. Lisarda, following the Aristotelian medical tradition that viewed females as a product of insufficient heat during generation, appears to blame her lack of visible male genitalia on nature's greed, for it denied her the heat necessary to make her internal organs external: «Si conmigo / la naturaleza avara / anduvo, ¿qué culpa tiene / el valor que me acompaña?/ El alma, y el corazón / tengo de varón»<sup>44</sup>.

In the second act, Lisarda's father betrays her physical gender to Emperor Carlos V. But even the revelation that she is a woman is challenged by Lisarda: «Eso está / por averiguar»<sup>45</sup>. The Captain attributes Lisarda's inappropriate behavior to conditioning as a result of her exposure to constant warfare:

Esta muchacha es mi hija,  
que no es varón, y la guerra,  
en que siempre se ha criado,  
la ha infundido aliento, y fuerza:  
no la puedo reducir  
a que mude el traje<sup>46</sup>.

Lobón comments: «De esta / quedas desvaronizado»<sup>47</sup> and calls her also a poorly tamed mare («esta mal domada yegua»<sup>48</sup>). Even though her secret has been revealed, Lisarda insists to Carlos that her name is Lisardo and she asserts that it is better to be a man than a woman: «pero mejor es ser hombre, / que a buena luz se contempla: / que un hombre puede ser Papa / y una mujer, aunque quiera, / no puede ni aun monacillo»<sup>49</sup>. She also laments losing the *encomienda* and *jiqueta* that were to be her reward for her exploits on the battlefield. When the monarch promises to grant them to her future husband, Lisarda totally rejects the norms that society has assigned to her birth gender:

Henao (1611-1704) relates a similar anecdote of Spanish admiral Antonio Oquendo (1577-1640). When his heart was removed for embalming, it was found to have hairs growing from it: «Después fue abierto el cadáver para embalsamarle y llevarle así al templo de la Compañía de S. Sebastián, y notamos como cosa particular que el corazón era muy grande, aunque el cuerpo pequeño, y que del corazón brotaba un pelo crecido» (quoted in Casimiro de Govantes, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de España*, vol. 2, p. 342. Spanish Golden Age plays with the title *Aristómenes Mesenio* have been attributed to Calderón, Moreto, Coello and Matos Fragoso.

43. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1576-1578, p. 18.

44. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1587-1592, p. 18. For more on the medical view of sexuality and the pro- and anti-feminist debate as it played out in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, see Lauer, 2016.

45. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1439-1440, p. 42.

46. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1449-1454, p. 42.

47. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1455-145, p. 42.

48. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, v. 1462, p. 43.

49. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1477-1481, p. 43.

sufrir había  
de un marido la obediencia?  
¿Yo parir y arrullar niños?  
¿Yo apacible y halagüeña  
sosegarle en los enojos,  
aliviarle en las tristezas,  
poniéndome en ocasión  
de cogerle de una pierna,  
si me daba algún enfado,  
y arrojarle de aquí a Illescas?<sup>50</sup>

The monarch orders her to dress appropriately, even though she vows never to be obedient to a man, and she grudgingly accedes to the marriage as a loyal subject, although she never accepts the gender identity that society has assigned her.

When the Duke attempts to praise Lisarda by calling her an Amazon, she admonishes him with: «Engáñase vuexcelencia, / diga un Aquiles, o un Cid / y no me compare a hembras»<sup>51</sup>. But dress as a woman she must, and comic relief is provided when she puts her *basquiña* on backwards and stumbles and falls in her high-heeled shoes. Even with female attire, she does not appear feminine, as Lobón observes: «Pareces / hermafrodita»<sup>52</sup>. When she hears shouts of «Muera, matedle», Lisarda reverts to the masculine instincts that come to her naturally and takes Lobón's sword to enter the fray. When she returns to the stage, she is limping with one shoe on and one missing as she cleans her sword, more determined than ever to continue her life as a soldier and rejoin the Italian wars that Spain waged against Francis I and Suleiman the Magnificent.

Forced to serve in the retinue of the Infanta Doña Leonor at Palace, Lisarda's actions and gestures continue to be masculine, as indicated in the stage directions: «*haciéndose aire con descompuestas acciones, y tocada como de hombre*», and «*hace las cortesías como hombre*»<sup>53</sup>. At every turn Lisarda rejects attempts to make her conform to the role assigned to her gender: «pero ¿no puedo ser yo / lo que quisiere?»<sup>54</sup>. Consistent and defiant to the end, unlike other similar cases where love has the power to capitulate the will and civilize even the most «unruly women» (to use Boyle's term), Lisarda/Lisardo insists that she does not want to marry Carlos de Lanoy, but finally agrees to do so as a loyal subject of her monarch. But in so doing she poses a disconcerting and unanswered question, one potentially perceived as unsettling by at least some of the spectators in attendance because it subverts the typical closure of Spanish Golden Age *comedias* brought about as the result of happy marriages: «obedezco, como esclava / tuya; mas, César invicto, / ¿quién es marido de quién?»<sup>55</sup>. This bold and defiant act of self-affirmation is left

50. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1497-1506, pp. 43-44.

51. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1528-1530, p. 44.

52. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1603-1604, p. 47.

53. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, p. 54.

54. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 1939-1940, p. 57.

55. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 2375-2377, p. 68.

unchallenged, perhaps because Lisarda's presence in the play is relegated to the subplot, and her actions are often mitigated by a veil of humor. However, even her last lines in the play constitute an act of defiance against male dominated society: «pero yo por mi marido, / con su licencia o sin ella, / saldré al campo y vive Cristo»<sup>56</sup>.

Catherine Connor (Swietlicki) takes a judicious approach to the issue of comic subversions and inversions of Spanish Golden Age heroines and the so-called closure brought about by the conventional marriages that end so many plays<sup>57</sup>. For this critic, «what really matters [...] is not the play's conclusion per se, conventional as it may be, but rather the closure reached by individual spectators as they attempt to make meaning of the events of the entire play within the framework of their own life experiences»<sup>58</sup>. Although marriage in *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* is upheld as the principal among a number of social institutions imposed by masculine authority to subdue, if not actually tame, unruly women, one must wonder at the range of responses that would have been the takeaway for its heterogeneous spectators. Among other possible interpretations, some spectators may have viewed Lisarda as a victim of an oppressive system that suppresses all individuality; others may have seen her as a heroic blazon of alterity who will continue to work from within the system to undermine and overthrow it, while a not insignificant portion of the spectators might have found her ambiguous query to be a sassy and impudent retort worthy of nothing more than a good laugh at the expense of the masculinity of her husband to be. So much would have depended on the performative decision taken by the actress or *autor de compañía* on how the dialogue should be delivered, and thus any attempt at an authoritative interpretation of the line «¿Quién es marido de quién?» is an almost absurd endeavor. It is only through the text in performance that we can appreciate the full spectrum of interpretative possibilities of a Spanish Golden Age play, and since details of performance are generally lost for most of these plays, part of our analyses will always remain informed conjecture.

Lisarda remains faithful to her natural inclinations throughout the play, depicted as an asexual creation who wants nothing but the freedom to be accepted as a man in a male dominated world, and thus the unresolved conflict between her own gender identity and that assigned to her by society conforms in almost all respects to what modern psychiatry identifies as gender dysphoria. Cañadas notes that: «Transvestism brought patriarchal notions of gender difference and male superiority into question. [...] The Golden Age theater appears to have engaged, with characteristic ambivalence, in both subverting and reinforcing patriarchal ideas about

56. Monroy y Silva, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*, vv. 2390-2392, p. 69.

57. Carrión (2011, p. 121) points out that these conventional endings in marriage are often more complex than they might appear at first glance: «the path leading to and from the altar is far more circuitous and less predictable than might first appear. It is a route befitting the Baroque aesthetic of unexpected and often violent twists and turns, where Renaissance ideals of balance and reciprocity give way to imbalance and discord. In the *comedia*'s embrace of the Baroque aesthetic, a space for conflict emerges, particularly conjugal conflicts in which both men and women play active, and often antagonistic roles».

58. Connor (Swietlicki), 2000, p. 28.



gender»<sup>59</sup>. This is precisely the case in *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco*. Although Lisarda is obliged to fulfill her social contract of marriage, her transgressive subversion of male enforced gender norms quietly prevails, even though it is partially obscured in the background of the subplot.

Lisarda's upbringing in her father's military environment means that she was never socialized to construct her own identity in an interdependent and connected manner, as is typical for women. In this respect, Monroy y Silva may have intuited a modern psychological explanation for depression in dysphoric women who experience a discrepancy between how they view themselves and how they think that they are viewed by others close to them: «women suffer if they are unable to attain their own hopes and wishes for the self and they also suffer if they are unable to live up to the hopes and wishes that they believe others hold for them»<sup>60</sup>. This apparent depression over her lack of acceptance throughout the course of the play is transformed into subtle defiance in Lisarda's self-affirming vow to maintain her masculinity even in marriage.

Gender identity in early modern Iberia was not normally perceived as a spectrum but rather as a clearly demarcated set of polar opposites, especially by the moralists<sup>61</sup>. Those who transgressed these norms were the objects of scorn and derision. Soyer observes that: «In spite of such widespread gender stereotypes or perhaps because of them, many individuals did find themselves transgressing gender roles. In the eyes of society, such individuals were negatively referred to as "effeminate men" (*hombres afeminados* in Spanish) and "masculine women" (*mujeres varoniles* / *mulheres varoniles*)»<sup>62</sup>. Appropriate clothing, then, was the gatekeeper to assuring social order and moral rectitude<sup>63</sup>. Soyer adds: «to a large extent, a substantial portion of the population of early modern Spain and Portugal constructed and defined an individual's gender identity from social norms relating to physical characteristics and behaviour, especially sexual behaviour, as much as from the possession of male or female genitalia»<sup>64</sup>. The inordinate frequency<sup>65</sup> of the *mujer*

59. Cañadas, 2005, pp. 61-62.

60. Moretti *et al.*, 1998, p. 250.

61. Bates and Lauer study this phenomenon in the light of Judith Butler's theory on gender as a cultural construction for Ana Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer*, noting that: «La sociedad impone esta regulación binaria para suprimir la multiplicidad sexual de cualquier sexualidad que amenace la hegemonía heterosexual y reproductiva» (2010, p. 35).

62. Soyer, 2012, p. 18.

63. The old adage that *Clothes make the man*, rendered by Shakespeare as: *For the apparel oft proclaims the man* (Hamlet 1.3.73), is reversed in Spanish by the proverb *No haze el hábito al Monge* (Hernán Núñez de Toledo, *Refranes o proverbios en romance* (Lérida: Luis Manescal. 1621). For our purposes, the engendering of an individual by means of attire donned is evident in Francisco Agustín Tárrega's play *El cerco de Rodas* when Lorida, attired in her lover Diego's armor, proclaims: «¡Qué brío que da el azero, / cómo engendra valor nuevo / dentro de mi pecho fiero! / por el hábito que lleuo, / que estoy brauo caballero» (1609, Act 3, n. pag.)

64. Soyer, 2012, p. 288.

65. McKendrick points out that between 1590-1660 at least one new play per year featured a *mujer varonil*, without even taking into account those more numerous plays that featured the *disfraz varonil* (1974, p. 311).

*varonil / disfraz varonil* in Spanish Golden Age plays indicates that it was a successful box office strategy, but the frequency does not tell us *why* the enactment of gender ambiguity was so popular. I side with McKendrick's cautious approach toward drawing conclusions: «while it would be absurd to regard the theatre as an accurate mirror of society, it would be equally absurd to conclude that the theatre was immune to the new ideas on female education, unaware of the possibilities of female freedom, and uninterested in the feminist debate»<sup>66</sup>. Plays such as *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* help us to understand that gender identity in any age must be viewed as a broad spectrum and not the "either/or" imperative that soothed the anxieties of so many moralists in Golden Age Spain.

Whether Monroy y Silva was intentionally foregrounding a delicate and controversial depiction of gender confusion, or merely offering an often humorous and quirky twist on a ploy with a proven track record of drawing paying customers to the *corral de comedias*, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* is a play that deserves further study. Critics have ignored the question of Lisarda's gender identity in favor of analyzing the play's historicity in terms of its depiction of the battle of Pavia (1525) and the subsequent imprisonment of French king Francis I by his rival Charles V of Spain. In my opinion, the real interest of the play lies in the subplot and its examination of the psychosexual trauma of a character trapped between the imperatives of her chosen gender identity and society's decisive rejection of alterity<sup>67</sup>. Granted, Lisarda's apparent gender dysphoria is not fully developed, since her character forms part of the play's subplot, and I fully concur with Ignacio Arellano's prudent caution, when talking about the *comedia*, that: «No es posible observar este enorme corpus teatral como monolítica expresión de una sociedad patriarcal, o de reacción feminista, o de máquina propagandística, o de cualquier otra meta parcial y exclusiva»<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, *La batalla de Pavía y prisión del rey Francisco* is an outlier that defies easy classification, and deserves a place alongside Pérez de Montalbán's *La monja alférez* as a bold and daring experiment that breaks new ground in the depiction of gender roles in seventeenth-century Spanish drama.

66. McKendrick, 1974, p. 44.

67. Monroy y Silva and audience members alike were surely aware of real-life case histories of gender dysphoria. François Soyer documents several such cases, including the inquisitorial proceedings celebrated in Valencia in 1649-1650 against Francisco Roca, accused, among other things, of being a *mujer casada como hombre* (2012, p. 96). One of the witnesses deposed «[stated that Francisco Roca] went about clothed as a man, pretending to be a man and that he was married in this town [of Madrid] where he kept his wife. As a woman, he has had or has carnal relationships with some young men whose names were given and was living in concubinage with them» (Soyer, 2012, p. 103). The interrogation of other witnesses, including some of the men that Roca was purported to have slept with, led eventually to two physical examinations that established beyond a doubt that his gender was masculine. Francisco admitted to the inquisitors that he had shared his bed with other men in a platonic way, but denied categorically that he had engaged in homosexual relations with them. The author concludes that Roca must have suffered from what modern psychologists term *autogynephilia*, a form of transsexualism in which men are aroused by the thought of having a female body (Soyer, 2012, p. 123).

68. Arellano, 2015, p. 12.

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